

XXXI.—*On the Birds exhibited in the International Fisheries Exhibition.* By HOWARD SAUNDERS, F.Z.S.

IN the selection of the species of birds which may, with any show of consistency, be considered to be connected with fish or fisheries, the exhibitors in the various sections have permitted themselves an elasticity which is not without its advantages. As a general rule, the birds exhibited are either fish-eaters or frequenters of marshes and waters, salt or fresh; but to this there is a notable exception in the collection which, as it happens, is almost the nearest to the principal entrance of the Exhibition, and which, as every ornithologist will allow, is undoubtedly first in scientific importance. It is to the Swedish section that the student will at once direct his steps, and, interesting as is the collection of skeletons of aquatic birds from the Gothenburg Museum, contributed by the liberality of Mr. Oscar Dickson, he will pass on to that more important monument of the enterprise of the merchant-prince and the daring of a scientific navigator—the birds of the ‘Vega’ Expedition under Professor and Baron Nordenskiöld.

It will be remembered that, after rounding Cape Chelyuskin and virtually accomplishing the north-east passage by sea, the ‘Vega’ was unexpectedly ice-bound at a point on the Siberian coast which is often reached by American whalers from Behring’s Straits. The nearest settlement of the aboriginal Chukches was Pitlekaj, and it was in this neighbourhood that the most interesting portion of the ornithological collection was obtained. Up to the 19th October myriads of birds passed southwards from the north-west; but by the 3rd November this procession was over, and it was noticed as something uncommon that a Gull like an Ivory Gull, but with a black head, settled in the vicinity of the vessel. This might have been an adult Sabine; but it was probably an immature example of the Ivory Gull, some individuals being very dark about the face, and, at a distance, apparently black-headed. Only the cosmopolitan Raven, the Snowy Owl, and its prey the Ptarmigan remained

throughout the entire winter. Of the latter there are two examples, the one being a male obtained on 13th May 1879, still in winter plumage, except about the neck, where the ruddy-brown feathers are appearing, and catalogued as *Lagopus subalpinus*, Nilsson, = *L. albus* (Gm.), i. e. the Willow-Ptarmigan; and the other a female, without special date or locality, named *L. alpinus*, Nilss. The latter I should be inclined to refer to the form *L. rupestris*, obtained by Mr. Seeböhm, in $71\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ N., on the Yenesei, which ranges from Iceland, Greenland, and Newfoundland, right across the northern portions of America and Arctic Siberia, probably to the Ural range or the vicinity. Speaking of Ptarmigan it may be mentioned that there is, in the same show-case, a bird which has an amusing history, exemplifying the old proverb of "the biter bit." The specimen in question is an immature Ivory Gull (*Pagophila eburnea*), which was offered by the Chukches as a Ptarmigan; and when Nordenskiöld with delight purchased the bird, a self-satisfied smile passed over the countenance of the seller, who was evidently proud of his successful trick. The last week in April the return of the birds after their winter absence commenced at Pitkeaj, and most of the specimens in the collection were obtained between that date and the liberation of the 'Vega' on the 18th July 1879. It may be as well to notice the more interesting of the exhibited specimens in the order in which they are set down in the special Catalogue of the Swedish Section.

The King Eider Duck, *Somateria spectabilis*, represented by a fine pair of birds, is a well-known circumpolar species, which, in the northern latitudes, replaces the Common Eider, *S. mollissima*, a species not observed on the coasts of Eastern Siberia. It may be mentioned, incidentally, that the King Eider, which had only been known to reach Alaska, has recently been recorded by Mr. Henshaw from San Francisco (Bull. Nutt. Orn. Club, 1880, p. 189). Next in order comes the Pacific Eider, *Somateria v-nigrum*, recognizable by the v-shaped mark under the chin, to which it owes its name; and its range is now shown to extend for some distance beyond American waters. A pair of the rare Spectacled Eider,

Somateria fischeri, a species which is also generically distinguished as *Arctonetta* and *Lampronetta*, is another North-American bird which crosses to Siberia: the coloration of the head in the male is remarkable for the quaintness of its arrangement, and the spectacle-mark is well defined in the female. Steller's Duck is represented, as a matter of course, the original specimens having come from Kamtschatka. The Brent Goose is the American form, *Bernicla nigricans*; and those who maintain the distinctness of the American and European forms of the White-fronted Goose have now an excellent opportunity for deciding whether the Pitlekaj bird is *Anser gambeli* or *A. albifrons*. A couple of the handsome Emperor Goose, *Bernicla canagica*, complete the list of the more important Anatidæ.

The only Cormorant represented is *Graculus bicristatus*; but three species of Divers were obtained, namely, the Black-throated, the Red-throated, and that Pacific form of the Great Northern Diver which is distinguished from *Colymbus glacialis* by its larger and differently shaped yellowish-white bill and some differences in plumage, and which has received the name of *Colymbus adamsi*. Messrs. Blakiston and Pryer will be interested in learning that I obtained a female specimen of this species shot off Nagasaki, Japan, from Capt. St. John, when in command of H.M.S. 'Sylvia.' Of the Mormonidæ, *Phaleris cristatella* and *Ciceronia microceros* were obtained at Lawrence Island, and *Mormon cirrhata* and *M. corniculata* at Behring's Island, after the liberation of the ship. Of the Laridæ in the same case, there is only one which calls for any special remark; but that bird is the gem of the whole collection, namely *Rhodostethia rosea*, Macgill., shot by Almqvist on the 1st July 1879. It is a bird hatched the previous year, and a dark mottled band running down the wing-coverts and tertials indicates immaturity; the wedge-shaped tail is, however, pure white, and the black collar is quite visible at the back of the neck, although indistinct in front. This is a very important specimen, as it completes our knowledge of the various stages of this bird's plumage: the young in down and the egg have still to be discovered. According to the

correspondent of the 'New York Herald' of May 17th, 1882, writing from Irkutsk on 6th March, Mr. Newcomb, the naturalist to the ill-fated 'Jeannette,' obtained five examples of this small Gull at or near Herald Island; and Capt. Collins, of the American Section, informs me that he believes these were saved from the wreck, and finally reached the Smithsonian Institution, which has recently secured or received news of six specimens from Alaska. As it was obtained by the Austro-Hungarian Expedition on Franz-Josef Land, this species is now shown to be circumpolar. There is another Gull in the collection about which a few words may be said, and that is the adult specimen of *Larus cachinnans*, catalogued as *L. argentatus*, var. *occidentalis*, Schl. It may be *L. occidentalis* apud Schlegel; but it is most assuredly not the species to which Audubon first applied that name, and which alone has the right to it. As errors die hard, and it was only the other day that my old enemy was recorded under this name from China (*Ibis*, 1882, p. 436), I may repeat, what has already been stated in detail (*P. Z. S.* 1878, pp. 171-172), that *L. occidentalis*, Audubon, is, for a member of this group of Herring-Gulls, a very well-marked species, which has *only* been obtained on the Pacific coast of North America.

The examples of *Limicolæ* are interesting as showing their geographical distribution. For instance, I do not remember that *Eudromias morinellus* has previously been recorded from so far east as the 'Vega's' winter-quarters; but the great attraction is the Spoonbilled Sandpiper (*Eurynorhynchus pygmaeus*), so rare in collections, but so common in spring in the vicinity of the 'Vega' that it was twice served in some numbers at the gunroom table, for which, as Nordenskiöld observes, many reproaches had subsequently to be endured by the partakers in the costly feast. This remarkable wader has been figured and described in detail by Mr. J. E. Harting (*Ibis*, 1869, pp. 426-434, pl. xii.); but although fourteen years have elapsed since he wrote, the only real addition to our knowledge of its habitat consists in the fact that it visits Japan and passes through North-eastern Siberia on its way to some breeding-grounds as yet undiscovered.

Amongst the Accipitres may be noted an example of the American Bald Eagle (*Haliaëtus leucocephalus*), from Behring Island, off Kamtschatka, a species which I do not recollect to have seen recorded before from any point on the Asiatic side; and there is a specimen of *Falco candicans* from the same locality. The Hawk-Owl obtained at Pitlekaj appears to be of the American form, *Surnia funerea*, and not of the Old-World form, *P. ulula*, which is generally stated by recent authors to range from Northern Europe to Kamtschatka.

The majority of the Passeres are still in spirits; but some interesting specimens are mounted, such as *Saxicola ænanthe*, *Sylvia borealis* (the identification of which I leave to Mr. Seebohm), and *Turdus swainsoni*, which, it will be remembered, has straggled to that closely-observed little island, Heligoland. The species in spirits are catalogued as *Junco hiemalis*, *Ægiothus linaria*, *Dendræca coronata*, *Anthus ludovicianus*, *A. cervinus*, *Motacilla flava*, *M. alba*, and the true *Cyanecula suecica* with the red throat-spot. There is also a specimen of Sabine's Gull in spirits.

The American section, under the charge of Mr. Goode, cannot be expected to rival in the rarity of its exhibits the spoils of the North-east Passage; but the cases of mounted birds contain many examples of great interest, and, as picked specimens, some of them are naturally superior to those of the 'Vega.' There are two fine cases of Herodiones, and a splendid series of Anseres, amongst which are conspicuous for their beauty the examples of the Emperor Goose, Steller's Duck, the Spectacled Eider, and the King Eider, all from Alaska. There is a small but choice collection of Laridæ, containing beautiful specimens of Sabine's and Bonaparte's Gulls, and also of Petrels. Amongst the latter, strange to say, is an example of the Cinereous Shearwater (*Puffinus kuhli*) from Beyrout, but not of the Atlantic *P. major*, which is abundant on the American coasts. Probably there has been a mistake in sorting the specimens; for, so far as I am aware, the yellow-footed Mediterranean bird has not been found beyond the Canaries and Madeira, and perhaps the Azores. The Mormonidæ and Alcidiæ are particularly good, and, in

addition to those exhibited in the 'Vega' collection, are *Ciceronia pusilla* from St. Paul's Island, Alaska, and the Whiskered Auk and the Black-throated Guillemot from Copper Island, Kamtschatka, collected by Mr. L. Stejneger. Besides the mounted birds there are some hundreds of skins in boxes, accessible to ornithologists on application to Mr. Goode; and attached to this section will be found Captain Collins, well known by name to all readers of the 'Nuttall Bulletin,' who probably knows more about the distribution and the habits of sea-birds on the eastern coasts of North America than all the rest of the ornithological brotherhood together.

There are some handsome cases of birds in the Canadian department, the most remarkable object being, perhaps, a downy nestling of the Great Northern Diver; and in the Norwegian section are some fine and well-mounted specimens of Ducks, Gulls, and Divers. Newfoundland has a large group of a similar character, the most interesting bird being a young male of the King Eider in its second year's plumage—a stage rarely met with; and there is a fine case of Grouse lent by Capt. W. R. Kennedy, R.N. The Bahamas also send a showy case of Gulls, Terns, Herons, Bitterns, Flamingos, &c.

Australia is well represented; and amongst other species are:—the remarkable Musk-Duck (*Biziura lobata*), which Mr. E. P. Ramsay declares to be as destructive to fish as any Cormorant; *Podiceps australis* and *P. novæ-hollandiæ*, the closely allied representatives of our *P. rubricollis*; the dusky Mutton-bird (*Puffinus brevicaudus*), with a small hind toe as sharp as a spur; the Australian form of the Gull-billed Tern, to which Gould gave the name of *Sterna macrotarsa*, but which is rather characterized by the size of the bill, and of which the breeding-grounds in Australia have but recently been discovered; and a fine series of Herons, Grebes, &c. A smaller but well-chosen collection represents Tasmania. In the Indian section are six large cases of closely grouped birds, mounted by Burton and Sons, from the Victoria and Albert Museum, Bombay; and on a table are some loose

specimens, amongst them a pair of dissipated-looking *Ardeola grayi* from Madras. In the Chinese quarter the most prominent object is the large boat, with a dozen or so of Chinese Cormorants (apparently *Phalacrocorax carbo*) ready for fishing; but as regards the rest of the exhibit, we are irresistibly reminded of the well-known opinion of Bret Harte when we see a Magpie and some other Passeres, a Coot, an Avocet, some Ducks, a Swan, and a conventional show-case of *Larus ridibundus* and its young put forth as representatives of the fish-eaters of the Celestial Empire.

In the long galleries on either side of and behind the Conservatory are a number of cases exhibited by various bird-stuffers, one of whom contributes a group containing, amongst other things, a Dipper with a small fish in its bill! Mr. Gunn, of Norwich, has a series of cases, some of them containing specimens of rare visitors which have promptly been slain on arrival to make the joy of some collector of "British-killed" birds; and there are others containing more or less accurately rendered family groups, although it may be allowable to demur to a *Sterna minuta* hovering over a clutch of *four* eggs. As regards the rest of the British section, it may be well to imitate the filial piety of the patriarchs, and, discreetly walking backwards, drop the mantle of oblivion over the nakedness of the fatherland.

XXXII.—*A Review of the Species of the Family Icteridæ.*—

Part II. Icterinæ. By P. L. SCLATER, M.A., Ph.D., F.R.S.

(Plate XI.)

[Continued from p. 163.]

SHORN of the Cassiques, the Icterinæ, according to my views, contain only one large genus, *Icterus*, which, however, it is possible, for convenience' sake, to divide into three sections—*Hyphantes*, *Pendulinus*, and *Icterus*. But I quite agree with the distinguished authors of the 'History of North-American Birds'*, that it is "exceedingly difficult to arrange these

* Op. cit. vol. ii. p. 180.